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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000957

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, SE WILLIAMSON, PRM,
IO, NSC FOR BPITTMAN AND CHUDSON, DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO
USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: "PRECARIOUS" DARFUR HUNGER GAP CALLS FOR URGENT US
ACTION

REF: A. KHARTOUM 896
[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 894

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

- [1](#)1. (SBU) This is an action message. See para 5-6.
- [1](#)2. (SBU) On June 22 the United Nations country team in Sudan issued a statement on the increasingly precarious "hunger gap" this year in Darfur. The rainy season between May and October is always the toughest time of the year but this year it has been exacerbated by the increase in vehicle hijackings (essentially one a day) and attacks on food convoys which culminated in a 40 percent cut in the general food ration. At least 2.7 million people will be affected by a reduction for at least the next two months. A substantially lower harvest in Darfur and rising food prices have also contributed to the problem. The UN noted that "a failure to respond now will have serious repercussions on the well-being and development of the people of Darfur - not just during the coming days and months but in the longer term."
- [1](#)3. (C) As usual, the responsibility for this problem is shared. The cynical and brutal Sudanese regime bears ultimately responsibility for all events in Darfur, creating a horrendous humanitarian crisis in 2003-2005 that resulted in thousands of dead and millions of Darfuris now largely dependent on international food handouts. Most of the hijackings and attacks are today probably carried out by rebel groups, some of them opposed and some allied to Khartoum (such as SLA-Peace Wing and SLA-Minnawi) in addition to irregular Arab militias funded by the regime. Some if not most of these rebel groups are armed by neighboring countries like Chad and Libya. If UNAMID was larger and better equipped, it could provide greater security and protect convoys, but it can barely protect itself. Despite promises to provide greater protection to food convoys, the Khartoum Government has been unwilling or unable to do so (we believe it is a mixture of both) so the unavoidable fact remains that human suffering and needless deaths in Darfur will ratchet up in the next few months before hopefully declining again in the fall. There is no quick fix or easy solution but urgent US action could at least blunt some of the worst effects of Sudan's hunger gap. Some of the actions we urge have been part of the US-Sudan dialogue overseen by SE Willamso in the past months, others have been tried in the past with little success. It may well be that the steps we suggest to achieve a desired set of short-term results will be totally ineffective - American clout with Khartoum and with rebel groups is limited - but post believes this is an effort worth taking.
- [1](#)4. (C) If past behavior is any guide, the Sudanese regime (and rebel movements) will be unwilling or unable to do all we ask in the midst of what is still an armed conflict and a

ruthless struggle for power. When pressed by the international community however, the regime does sometimes respond with some positive steps such as when it renewed the moratorium for humanitarian NGOs in Darfur for another year in January 2008 or facilitated some parts of UNAMID deployment. The single most important step - increasing security for food convoys - may be beyond the regime's means to provide on a consistent level given its multiple confrontations with foes in Darfur and Abyei and its witchhunt of supposed subversive elements following the May 10 JEM attack on Omdurman. But even reluctant, partial and badly implemented steps by the regime to address this issue, could pay dividends in ameliorating human suffering this season in Darfur.

15. (SBU) Actions needed:

-- GOS to ensure the food convoys with escorts are organized at least every 48 hours on main routes into Darfur. WFP needs to maintain daily dispatches of at least 2,000 MT in order to meet monthly requirements.

-- Commercial trucks carrying food aid and other humanitarian supplies to be permitted to travel in and out of Darfur every day, regardless of whether escorts are in place or not (delays in providing security by Sudanese security have resulted in traffic jams of up to 800 empty food trucks in South Darfur waiting for an escort to pick up more supplies in El Obeid).

-- Rebel groups must stop hijacking food trucks and humanitarian organizations. Security for unhindered passage

KHARTOUM 00000957 002 OF 002

of humanitarian agencies and relief supplies must be ensured in their areas of control.

-- GOS to permit fuel shipments for water pumps into IDP camps without interruption.

-- GOS to enact its agreement to release results of technically cleared humanitarian surveys, including nutritional and crop surveys, and minimize delays in publishing future survey findings.

-- GOS to immediately allow importation of all USAID food aid, including previously banned corn-soya blend (CSB).

-- GOS to allow NGOs to use rental vehicles in North Darfur.

16. (C) Urgent steps to be taken to encourage these actions:

-- US Charge in Khartoum to ask senior Sudanese officials to commit to taking these steps immediately (Note: CDA has already begun doing so and will continue regardless of other actions. End note).

-- Department (AF Bureau) to call in Sudanese Charge in Washington and urge same steps to be taken.

-- USUN to pass same message to the Sudanese PermRep at the UN.

-- USG to encourage WFP Executive Director and other senior UN officials to pass the same message to senior Sudanese officials.

-- Senior USG officials (such as AF A/S Frazer and/or Special Envoy) to pass same message to appropriate senior Sudanese officials such as FM Alor, Presidential Advisor Nafie or Presidential Advisor Ismail.

-- USG to pass same message to rebel leaders and those who influence/support them (JEM, SLA/Unity, SLA/MM, SLA/Abdul Wahid, Chad, Libya).

-- As a last step, if conditions seriously deteriorate, the USG could go public with a call for both the GOS and Darfuri rebels to cease actions (or inaction) which are making hunger and malnutrition in Darfur worse than they would or should be. Such a step should have to be approved by the Inter-Agency, and carefully calibrated not to upset the possibility of pursuing an emergency airlift option if there is no improvement in food deliveries in the coming months. Such an airlift would require GOS approval.

17. (C) These actions and the steps recommended to achieve them are no real substitute in the long run to other processes that must come into being in Darfur: an effective UNAMID force, better local governance, a real political process of negotiation between rebel groups and the regime with the buy-in of local people, a major improvement in the security situation. The steps suggested for USG officials are also no substitute for a substantive dialogue at the appropriate time with Sudan in pursuit of our foreign policy interests -- a dialogue that requires a basic change in consistently poor Sudanese regime behavior and attitude. Even if the overstretched regime (and/or the rebels) can be made to listen to reason, their own self-interest - the lust for power - may prevent them from doing much to help. Some in the regime may want to hold out for the resumption of a more formal diplomatic dialogue or have concluded that any future American blandishments are as empty as American threats. But if there is even a slight chance that some meetings and phone calls could get some more food into Darfur in the next 2-3 months, that is an option worth exploring and implementing.

FERNANDEZ